**Transcript**

**Making Life Easier – Part 1 – The Long View**

 **June 3, 2022**

We/re starting a new series today. It’s called *Making Life Easier*. I suppose I could have called this series *Life Skills* – kind of a common term. Since life has been designed by God to be difficult, with the goal of us managing as best we can, there are a number of skills we can develop to help with the process.

I got the idea for the series from the series before it, which was *Fruit of the Spirit*. It’s about all the various fruits of the Holy Spirit mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5. And I noticed, as I was going through there, thinking about the application of these things in my life and other people I know, that having the fruit of God’s Spirit in your life makes life easier too. In fact, that’s why he was explaining it to them – because there was a problem in their congregation that was making life unnecessarily difficult for them. And he showed them how to use the Spirit to make it easier. I guess, maybe, that’s what Jesus meant when He said, “My burden is light.” I always thought that meant that Christianity is difficult, but not as difficult as going it alone. And I’m sure there’s some truth to that. But now I see something more to what He said. It also means that living life the way God hopes we will, gives us peace, in spite of the bad things that come along in all of our lives.

When I thought about this, I started looking back at my clients and noticing that many of them suffered a lot, because they were making life hard on themselves. I tried to catalog some of their issues to see if there were common patterns, and this series is more or less the result of that effort – some real life pain-saving approaches.

The first one that we’re going to talk about today is called *The Long View*. If you’ve listened to some of my presentations lately, you may remember that I used this term in the previous series, called *The Fruit of the Spirit*. You can find it on the LifeResource Website, liferesource.org. Just click on the Series button on the top menu, and you’ll find it there, along with all the other series we offer.

Now, some personal observation: Many of the people I meet focus on their pain, or on what’s going on right now – never thinking to look beyond to see why things are happening. Or, maybe they’re driven by biology – when in bed, it’s easiest to stay there; when up late at night, it’s easiest to stay up; it’s easier to get an abortion than to carry a baby full-term and then raise it to adulthood. Or, maybe they’re driven to a sense of entitlement – “I deserve to have money,” and the unstated part is “without working for it.”

I was talking to one of my daughters recently, and she was telling me that she was trying to hire some people to work for her company. And many of them had no interest in a career, or even working consistently, but they still managed to go out to eat at nice places. They did fun things, like vacation and wore nice clothes, etcetera – mostly on credit cards they never intended to pay back. So, rather than contributing to society, they have made themselves a drag on it for the rest of us. The problem with all these things that I’ve mentioned is that there are negative consequences for living these ways. I’ve seen so many people miserable because of living life just for the present. It’s depressing to have to live this way. And most of the people I meet that do live that way think they are depressed because they have a chemical imbalance and need drugs, when really, it’s about the choices they make when living for the moment and drifting with no aspiration. That’s a depressing way to live. We were designed to make contributions – to add to, rather than taking away from.

In his amazing book, *The Thread*, Ron Dart takes us back to Egypt. Let me back up just a little bit. Somebody extends their credit card, that’s a problem. But this goes a lot deeper and can be a lot more difficult than just things like that. So, Ron Dart, in *The Thread*, takes us back to Egypt and the story of Moses as a baby. He mother put him in a reed raft and hid him in the reeds along the Nile. Why? Well, it’s a long story, so I’ll shorten a bit to make the point.

The Israelites, as you probably know, were slaves in Egypt, but they had grown to be such a large population that the Egyptians were becoming alarmed. They feared for their safety. So, Pharaoh made a law requiring everyone to throw the male babies in the Nile – of the Israelites. Now back then, nations did not run on computers or commerce. The really great ones, like Rome, Babylon, Assyria, Egypt and many others all ran on slave labor. What we’re talking about here then is financial power – things having to do with life-style and quality of life. And, in Egypt, if the people wanted to maintain their standard of living, they thought they needed slaves. Too many slaves could be dangerous, because they would outnumber the enslaving population. So, in Egypt, the entire population colluded with the government to keep their slaves under control. It was a *defacto* kind of agreement. They just all did what they had to do to keep things going the way they wanted. So, all was well they thought right up until the time God judged them evil for killing babies, and He killed every firstborn of every family and among all the animals in one night.

And Ron mentioned that people ask him quite often, “Why did God kill all the babies in Egypt?” Well, if you think about it, it’s obvious. *They* were killing babies. They were killing other people’s babies, and it happened to be that these people were His people. So, it was like Jesus said later, when it comes to God’s judgment, “What goes around, comes around” – a logical consequence for the sin they committed as a nation. Certainly something for *our* nation to think about today. Do we think we’re going to get away scot free killing millions of babies. Well, I don’t think so. God has compassion for the vulnerable and He has wrath for those who murder them. So, if we’re around when God shows up, we’d better be on the right side of the river.

Now, this principle of taking the long-range view doesn’t just apply to a few areas of life. It applies to all of them. If you insult or abuse your mate, there’s a consequence to that. She’s going to become resentful, possibly even angry. Or, maybe he would, if the woman is the one that’s the abuser. I heard once about a woman whose husband had beaten her for years. And when she’d finally had enough of it, she waited until he was asleep, then hit him in the face with a cast iron skillet. When he woke up in the hospital with his facial bones broken and all swollen, she was there to tell him, “If you ever beat me again, just remember, you can’t sleep forever.” That was a consequence of the way he behaved, right? He wasn’t taking the long view. He was taking the short drunken view.

We build a house without a plan and what happens? No, you have to think about how you want it to look and where you want it to be ahead of time. If we raise children without any goals, what happens? Well, the grow up the way they want to be and may be angry people. Who knows? If we vote for politicians because they will give us more free money, what happens? Well, as I speak, our inflation rate is at 6.8% – the highest it’s been since the early 80s. I remember it mostly being the late 70s. I think that not long after the start of 1980, it started to get better. We think we can get by with God by just being a good person. If we do that, what’s going to happen? Well, most people don’t know the answer to that question, but it’s not good. We could all go on and on. So, what’s the solution? What will greatly reduce difficulty in this life? Well, I call it the long view.

What is the long view? There are a lot of ways to say it, but one of the best ones in my mind is what Steven Covey called it in the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. He said it’s the habit of beginning with the end in mind. Now, this principle is all through the Bible. Here’s one of my favorite places. It’s in Deuteronomy 32:28 and 29 – and I’m breaking into the middle of a poem that Moses wrote:

**Deuteronomy 32:28-29 –** *For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them. If they were wise, they would understand this: the would discern their latter end.* In other words, they would think about what their doing and where it’s going to lead. So, they should think about how they would like it to be in the future, and then reverse engineer that back to what they should be doing now to make that happen. I think, in this case, that would be to draw close to God.

So, the Bible tells us when we’re not thinking in this long view way, we’re being foolish. Another word I have heard applied to this outlook is reverse-engineering of life – I just used it. Here’s another example: I heard about this man who wanted to retire early and travel the world, but how to do it? He was a working man. He and his wife both worked. They were respiratory therapists – both of them. They both worked in a hospital. He read some books on investing and decided to start buying stocks that paid dividends. He reinvested the dividend so he would have more stock as he went. He set it up so that the dividends that were paid by the stocks that he was buying, the annual payment that would be made for one stock in January, and then another in February, and another in March. So, he was setting himself up to have steady income through the year from his stock investment. But then he had to find a way to afford a way to buy the stock, so he found ways to economize. He and his wife decided to live on one of their salaries and invest the other one in his stocks. And I believe they bought a house and they rented that out. So, as they got older, they’d have two houses paid for, and they could sell one and invest in even more stocks there. So, they did move to a smaller house, which they bought. They got a less expensive car. They cut back on extravagant vacations and restaurants. And, instead of a having a hobby that costs money, he made a hobby of his stock project. And he found out that he loved seeing the totals climb rapidly. He and his wife would spend some free time researching places to visit and making plans for that ever closer time when they could quit work and make traveling their way of life. They were taking the long view and considering the end of their working lives. He found out, too, that he really didn’t miss the things they were doing without, and he and his wife were drawing closer as they worked on their fun project.

So, here’s the obvious point: It all started with asking the question, “How do I want to spend my time when I am older?” Consider the end. That’s what he was doing. He started with the end in his mind.

A really interesting example of this to me is the Tesla business plan. Here’s what they wanted to do: To create the most compelling car company of the 21st century by driving the world’s transition to electric vehicles. Interesting. So, before Elon Musk ever spent any money, he planned to start with a luxury car. Then, once established, focus on a mid-priced car. And then finally, a less expensive model so that everybody could afford one – most everybody. And doing it this way – the challenge of building such a car inexpensively would work by building the other strata first. Making an inexpensive electric car that’s practical is more challenging than making one that costs a lot of money, because you have more limitations on the smaller car. So, he planned it all out before he ever did anything. And right now, we’re looking at his top of the line cars, I believe. He may be starting to move right now – as I speak in 2021 – toward a mid-priced car. But, he also in his plan asked what to do about the people who would criticize for catering only to the wealthy. I never would have thought of that, but that sure has happened. And he even had a plan for that, because he thought from the end back to the beginning before he started. His plan even included a self-steering car that would be guided by satellite technology and accessed through a Tesla smart phone, which I see is now out on the market. And that would make it possible to use a car to move other people around like a taxi when the owner wasn’t even in it and when the owner didn’t need it. That would enable a lot of people to get around without owning a car less expensively, and help those who did have a car pay for a nicer car than they might have afforded otherwise.

So, I’m only skimming the top of his statement. You ought to duck it to see how long range his thinking was. By the way, *duck* refers to Duck Duck Go, a search engine that doesn’t track searches and make money by marketing people on the Internet – on the Internet big tech black market, I call it. By the way, I try to avoid the G company where I can.

So, beginning with the end in mind – that’s what he was doing. I was watching him on TV recently, and he mentioned that the President – presently Biden – held a meeting for American electric car manufacturers and Tesla wasn’t invited. I mean, the premier originator – the one that really is rocking on it – wasn’t invited. So, we can think about that.

So, there are so many applications to this principle that could save us so much trouble and make life so much easier if we would just invest a little more time in thinking about it. Just as a simple example, I’ve started thinking about this idea in a practical way in my life. I’ve tried to find ways to include it. As an example, I’ve started living my life project by project. If the project is large enough…. Why would I live it project by project? Because every project has a beginning and an end, and so you can start at the end and work backward. But, if the project is large enough, I create what I call a dashboard page for the project, because there’s going to be a lot of sub-projects to it. For example, I’m remodeling my home right now, so I’ve got a lot of projects. There’s base molding to be put in, painting, doors to be installed, shower to be redone, etcetera. So, on my dashboard page, there are areas for active projects, and then there are pending projects that I haven’t started yet, and then to encourage me and show progress, I have an area for to put my completed projects. But before all that, right at the top, I have a section called Vision. What do we want the house to look like when it’s completed? What style? How do we want to feel when we live in it? There are a lot of other things I’m not going to take the time to go look them all up, but you get the idea. I’ve started with the end in mind. And I try to do that with each sub-project as well. So we’re much more likely to get where we’re going if we know what our destination looks like before we leave on the trip. And that goes for everything in life, because all our actions have consequences – good or bad depending – and it pays to take the long view of our choices to see how things might turn out later.

Everything we’ve talked about so far is small potatoes compared to this next application. And that is *God’s* long view. God is a planner. If there ever was a long view planner, it’s our Creator. We can read in Ephesians 3:11 that this plan – everything that’s happening in it – was according to the eternal purpose that He has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord. So, Jesus Christ, in His office as the Christ, is a major factor in this plan. And everything the Father and the Son have done so far has been based on a plan developed before they began working on it. It was all on the books, so to speak. They started with the end in their minds. And what was that? Well, the end, in Their mind, is you and I perfected and eternal in God’s family. That’s the end goal – at least, for the part of the plan that concerns us. We don’t know what’s going to happen after that. But you can be sure that God knows. That’s been planned out too.

So, think about what we just talked about there and how God did that. By His nature, God created the system that is driven by a principle innate to Him – the way He works. So, that way, as we live in this system, we learn by experience how to operate the way He does. And the sooner and more effectively we get in step with that long view the closer we are to God’s way of doing things and thinking about things and behaving. In other words, we’re preparing for our future when we plan with the end in mind. It’s an exercise. And God tells us we’re foolish if we don’t do that. Because, if we make it to be with Him, we’re going to be doing that all our lives.

I’ve talked a lot about a movie that I saw some time ago. It’s called *Remember the Goal*. The title should be somewhat of a clue here. Now this movie didn’t have the best acting. It wasn’t the most expensive movie. Most of the actors we never saw before and clearly seemed to be inexperienced. But because of the power of the movie and the lesson, that stuff was irrelevant. But this movie is a metaphor about God’s long view and how embracing His way prepares us for life with Him. It was about a private Christian school’s girls cross country team. And the movie begins with them getting a new coach. And the coach asks the girls at the first practice if they wanted to win the state title. And when they all agreed – she made them all say that they did – when they all agreed to that goal, every time she asked them to do something challenging, or she did something they didn’t understand, she would say, “Remember the goal.”

Now, does God ever ask us to do challenging things, or do things that we don’t understand? All the time! And what He’s going to say to us is, “Remember the goal.” Now, she had a very different way of training runners than the girls were used to. And because of that, most of the girls quit because it seemed too easy to them in the beginning. Of course, the ones who quit didn’t realize that later in the season, it got a lot harder. The remaining girls complained a lot about how hard the workouts were. But she kept telling them that if they did the work, they would see that they could do them, because all the work they were doing was making them stronger. Now, the parents were pretty much oblivious to this. All they heard was the complaining at the beginning, so they tried to get this coach fired. In spite of all the questioning, and all griping, and all the complaining, she stuck to her guns and she set an example of remembering the goal herself. There was a reason why no one knew what she was doing. And that reason was that she knew so much more about cross-country than they did. They had no clue how her plan would work – right up until they won the state meet with only five girls running.

So, in the metaphor, she represents God, who always reverse engineers His successes. He starts with the goal and goes to the beginning of His plan and starts to working toward that goal. And the girls and their parents represent you and me, who have no clue why God puts us through the workouts He has for us. Because He knows *way* more about how to get us to the goal than we do. Jesus talked about this principle of understanding how smart God is and realizing that He knows more than we do in Matthew 5:3 – the very first beatitude.

**Matthew 5:3 –** *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* It’s in the bag for you. You want to go to the goal? Well, start here! Realize that God knows more than we know. When it comes to knowledge about spiritual things, we’re all beggars. We’re poor in spirit, but He’s rich.

So, all we need to do is do the workouts, because God knows what He’s doing. No need for doubting, no need for anxiety, no need for depression, complaining, tantrumming or quitting. And, if we’re smart, no foolish, we will take God’s long view. We will do our workouts, no matter how hard they are, remembering the goal – eternal life with God!

Now, if all of us would subscribe to that approach in our lives, which God designed to be challenging workouts – difficult, in other words – life is hard – it would all be worth it in the end, and the travel to the goal would becomes suddenly less difficult, which bring us back to where we started – the prospect that life could be easier. And taking the long-view is one of the ways that can happen.

We plan on putting out the next one in this series, *Making Life Easier,* in two weeks.

This is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries, serving children, families, and the Church of God.